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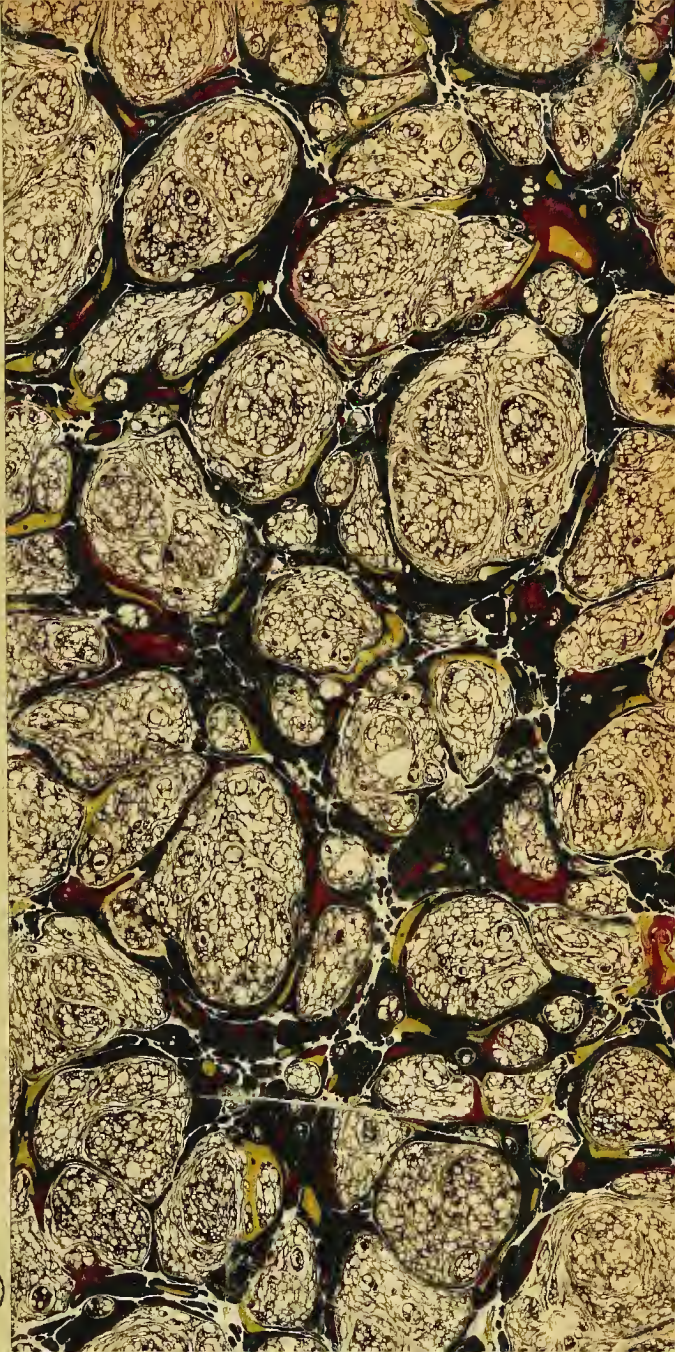

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The German emperor,

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THE

# GERMAN EMPEROR.

BY

POULTNEY BIGELOW.

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# THE GERMAN EMPEROR.

THE accession of William II. to the leadership of the German Empire, little more than a year ago, was the signal for an outburst of party passion that did not confine itself to the Fatherland. The English Press welcomed the event with ominous growls; and it was not long before every paper in North America, not to speak of Australia, was enlisted in the circulation of paragraphs illustrative of the new Kaiser's thirst for war and lack of filial piety.

The German Press, at least that portion of it which stands in close relations to throne and altar—and the Chancellor—

poured forth day after day the stereotyped form of praise supposed to be adapted to the ears of a new sovereign, but with so little discrimination that no one could have relished it less than the man they pretended to honour. Liberty of speech and Press being in Berlin imaginative conceptions, it was the hard task of the new Emperor to seize the reins of government without having had the opportunity, so richly enjoyed by his illustrious father, of creating for himself a strong and warm body of political and personal supporters. The great historic figure of his grandfather had passed away but ninety-nine days before that of Frederick III. His elevation came at a time when all the world was contemplating the two great sovereigns of the century, the heroes of Sadowa and Wörth, the builders of United

Germany. Before such men all popular feeling bowed cheerfully, as under a debt of gratitude from which death alone could liberate them. The present Emperor, who was but twelve years old when Sedan fell, has a new empire to create for himself, and even Germans ask themselves—will he succeed?

In force of character and intellectual power the present Emperor surpasses any of his predecessors, certainly up to the time of the Great Frederick. There are but few who know him well, but amongst those this sweeping statement will be recognised as within the truth, and moreover one that might have been made of him from his schoolboy years up. He thinks for himself, thinks logically, and, like many logical people on the threshold of life, follows a logical conclusion to a point

that might alarm a practical politician. His education for the ten years prior to attending the University in 1877 was entrusted principally to one of the most conscientious, most exacting, and, at the same time, most winning of academic spirits, the learned Dr. Hinzpeter.

In the topmost storey of Frederick the Great's "New Palace," near Potsdam, in what we may vulgarly term the attic, were the quarters occupied by the preceptors of the then Prince William, and his brother the sailor, Prince Henry. To one accustomed to the luxury of American and English houses, the bareness, not to say bleakness, of the upper storey of this famous palace was striking, particularly so in contrast to the innumerable gorgeous flunkeys who guarded the state saloons below. But it was ample in space and

a foretaste of the barrack life that should seem comfort to a Hohenzollern. In wet weather the great attic made a capital play-ground, and many an Imperial pane of glass was smashed by the blundering aim of one of the youngsters. In such romps the Princes entered heart and soul, giving and taking like the manly little fellows that they were. The good Dr. Hinzpeter would repeatedly whisper to me to take care and not hurt the Prince's left arm, a warning I was apt to forget, particularly with one who was so clever with his right.

As to the Emperor's imperfect arm, it is extraordinary that the life which has largely left it should have apparently been utilised in the strengthening of his right. Anyone who has shaken it feels as though Goetz von Berlichingen had given him

the grip. As a fencer, it was to be expected that he should develop the proficiency that characterised him at Bonn, but it was little thought that he would have the patience and energy requisite to becoming an expert shot, a good swimmer, and a capital oar. In the saddle he manages to hold his reins with his left, in order to have his sword arm free, and I have many times seen him ride across country taking obstacles which some of his officers have refused. And the moral courage, the persistency, the sense of duty, the pluck, which overcame the impediments to physical development, were constantly at work in other parts of his education.

In the park of Sans Souci, near the Palace, were planted the masts and rigging of a ship, where Prince Henry received

practical instruction in sailoring, and which became a favourite romping place. Netting was stretched over the lower space, and we were occasionally turned loose to scramble about the rigging, some of us playing at pirates making chase after a crew that had taken refuge aloft. Or, what was better still, we sometimes took a cruise about the neighbouring lakes on the miniature frigate, a craft that looks very portentous at a distance, with its scowling ports and man-o'-war yards, but in reality, when on board, seems little larger than a good-sized ship's cutter.*

* This little frigate was a present from George IV. to the Emperor's grandfather or grand-uncle, Frederick William IV., and is to-day the favourite yacht. At Potsdam the Emperor keeps also a little steam yacht, whose most important function now is to be ready to tow the frigate home should the wind

The cruise on the frigate was always considered the greatest treat of all, and no doubt to the pleasure derived then is due the fact that the Emperor to-day is a devoted patron of yachting, and sails his toy frigate on the Havel whenever opportunity offers.

When the day's romp was over, we had tea before going home, always out-of-doors in fair weather. The late Emperor Frederick and his devoted wife never failed to appear on these occasions, to say a few words to each of us, asking after our families, or about the sports of the day. The Empress in particular, then Crown Princess, always examined our food to see that it was wholesome,

fail. A detachment of blue-jackets is on duty at Potsdam for the purpose of looking after the Liliputian frigate and its auxiliary tender.

and saw that her little sons and daughters, as well as their guests, had their napkins properly tucked beneath their chins. The food was, it is needless to say, of the plainest and most wholesome. Bread or toast, fresh milk from the Crown Prince's model farm at Bornstedt, and some simple bread-cake, with big raisins in it, perhaps. When the Crown Princess and her husband made their appearance, no face lighted up with more pleasure than that of Prince William, for the relation of parent and child could not be conceived in more happy form than in those days in the park of Sans Souci. I remember once—it was at tea on the steam yacht, some anniversary, I believe—Prince William whispered to me a fact in which he took enormous pride, that the cake had been made by his mother.

Of course, at these romps, the idea of expecting etiquette to be observed would have been absurd; Dr. Hinzpeter would have none of it, the Royal parents held it in horror, and no one despised servility more than their eldest son.

Occasionally there came into these hilarious play-ground meetings some youngster, no doubt the son of a highly-placed official, who had been carefully drilled at home to show proper deference in the presence of the blood Royal. Such a poor wretch lived in momentary dread of violating some imaginary rule, and moved about morbidly conscious of his courtly *rôle*. Prince William, celebrated as he justly is for tact, could with difficulty conceal his contempt for the little flunkeys that now and then were forced upon him.

Not that he ridiculed their shyness; on the contrary, it was he who invariably set his new arrivals at their ease, discovered their leading tastes and suggested the sport that would please the larger number. And when sport was once under way it would have been a keen observer indeed who could have said that either Prince relied upon anything beyond his own head and hands to make the day successful. It was my fortune, as an American, to be credited with an intimate acquaintance with the red savages of the Wild West, and this reputation I could in no way shake off, in spite of the fact that at that time I had not even seen one. In consequence of this alleged knowledge I was frequently called upon to give details as to Indian warfare which I should deeply regret to see

reproduced. Prince William knew Cooper from beginning to end, and, for that matter, I was not far behind him, so that our Indian studies usually resolved themselves into impersonating some leather-stocking heroes, arming ourselves as fantastically as possible, and then crawling flat on our stomachs through the underbush, for the purpose of capturing some other party impersonating either a hostile tribe or a party of pale-faces.

But I have said enough to illustrate his character as a plucky, hearty, unaffected lad, affectionate towards his parents, and full of consideration for the youngsters of his own age with whom he was brought into contact. In 1874 Prince William and his brother went to a common public school, with uncommonly

hard benches, amidst a lot of the odds and ends of German social life invariably to be found in the national "Gymnasium." Let no one imagine this to be like attending Eton, where the expensive life limits the pupils to sons of comparatively rich people, and where an English prince can pass his time in luxury and comparative idleness. The schools of Germany are as inexorable in their requirements as any other branch of its public service, and when Prince William took his seat amidst the German burghers' children at the public school it was with the understanding that he should submit to the same discipline as the rest, and receive his graduating diploma only upon the conscientious fulfilment of the prescribed course.

Dr. Hinzpeter selected his school

after having visited the head masters of many others, and found most of them completely unnerved at the idea of having a live prince amongst them. Cassel is about eight hours by rail from Berlin, a distance that meant a great deal to the Princes and their parents. The Court was incensed at the idea of the heir to the throne consorting with ordinary boys; Dr. Hinzpeter was accused of introducing revolutionary ideas into the educational curriculum of the Hohenzollerns; the old Emperor William did not disguise his displeasure, and even the parents gave little more encouragement than their bare consent that the experiment should be tried. It was a bold game that Dr. Hinzpeter was playing; no Royal prince had ever been educated in a popular atmosphere, and nobody at Court wished

him well in the undertaking. His reputation was at stake, for while in the event of failure every voice would cry out, "I told you so," even successfully carried out there would be little to show for his labour. The tutor held that for once in a lifetime, at least, a prince should feel what his subjects do; that he should share the schoolboy interests of the every-day German and absorb the set of ideas that may enable him to strike the popular keynote when he sits upon the throne. For three years Prince William sat on the Cassel benches, *i.e.*, until he successfully passed his final examination and was declared ripe for matriculation at the University.

These three years were years of torture to the tutor. He lived with them, but could not actively assist their studies

for that would have been unfair to the other boys. Teachers would rush to him in desperation to report this and that of their Royal pupil—what should they do? They dared not reprimand the Lord's anointed! Hinzpeter had to strengthen them, to encourage the Prince to more complete application. Those were days of tension when any moment might destroy for ever the result hoped for. The Princes went to school and returned unattended. What if something happened to them on the way?—a schoolboy quarrel, a blow, an injury?—even so small a thing as that would have called the boys back to Berlin. What if a teacher had lost his head and a prince have raised rebellion in the schoolroom? None of these things happened, but nothing seemed more likely to those who did not under-

stand the precocious nature of Prince William's character and the devotion with which he pursued that which he considered his duty. And what this amounted to may be measured by the fact that before entering upon his three years' school course he had to pass an examination far beyond that required for admission to Oxford or Cambridge, and that parallel to his daily tasks on the "Gymnasium" benches were a series of special labours peculiar to the education of one soon destined to play a conspicuous part at a military Court—possibly to be its leader.

The career of the Prince upon leaving Cassel in 1877 offers less of the exceptional and striking than when Dr. Hinzpeter guided his work, for upon entering the University he put off the habits of

youth, said good-bye to his old tutor, and at once entered a field where all that met him were of a kind to force upon him the feeling that he was first a prince and lastly a student. For in Germany the avenue to most public employment and nearly all professional advancement lies through the University, and consequently no class of people have a more sensitive nose for the Royal aroma than the gentlemen who boast loyalty only to the Muses. In Bonn he had the attendance of a military aide, with whom he was on excellent terms, and who did probably but little to heighten the Prince's interest in the purely peaceful phases of national development. We may reasonably suppose that the enormous military energy which the Emperor developed shortly after leaving the academic groves

partook somewhat of the nature of reaction from the constant contemplation of economic industry, a reaction that might be expected from one whose whole framework tingles with exhilaration in the idea of active, daring sport.

The years that elapsed between leaving Bonn and entering upon the responsibilities of government, afforded him the opportunity of attending a series of lectures on modern history and the art of government such as falls to the lot of few of us, for the professors to whom he listened were William I., who had helped to make modern history since the Battle of Waterloo, and Bismarck, the prince of modern statecraft.

The venerable grandfather reviewed his historic past before the eager boy who was soon to be his successor. Day

after day the lectures succeeded one another, lectures of absorbing interest to the solitary student—and well noted down. Here he learned what motives had inspired the elder William in the various critical moments of modern Prussian history; how in his youth he had been flushed with hope of constitutional liberty for Germany; how these hopes had been wrecked upon the incapacity of the people to control themselves; in the stormy days of 1848 he had bowed before all but universal hatred and taken refuge in London; the same people that would have stoned him then made an idol of the hero of Sadowa in 1866. In all the phases of popular passion through which he had passed, one truth had been amply vindicated, namely, that fidelity to Hohenzollern tradition, uncompromising devotion

to duty, these attributes of Royalty, could not lead astray. That young William found in this lecture-room little sympathy for the teachings of Cobden or Benjamin Franklin may be readily imagined—the monarch who had ruled four years without Parliament, when Parliament disobeyed his wishes, was not exactly suited to inoculate the young Imperial candidate with the principles of civil liberty, let alone free-trade and small armies.

To secure the services of Professor Bismarck was not easy, for the Iron Chancellor felt himself far too busy in adjusting the foreign relations of Europe, and discovering Colonial land titles, to willingly enter the academic cathedra in favour of a prince who then had little prospect of ascending the throne of the Holy Roman Empire—at least until the lecturer should

have lain many years in his vault. But the grandfather finally had his way, and day after day found these two closeted like little Lord Fauntleroy and the savage Earl, the Chancellor rapidly melting before the manifest capacity of the pupil to appreciate his epigrammatic sentences, and finally coming to relish the hour of instruction more, if possible, than his Royal student. Here, again, our young Emperor learned at first-hand how to deal with obstinate Parliamentary segments, we cannot call them parties; how to measure public opinion; how to influence foreign Cabinets; how this and that difficulty in the past were overcome, and what troubles may be looked for in the future. It is not to be expected that the Emperor graduated in this course with any latent disposition to under-estimate the value of

bayonets in the economic evolution of the Empire.

That the peaceful teachings of the scholarly Dr. Hinzpeter have been lost is too much to say, for the public utterances of the Emperor show that he remembers well the days spent in the contemplation of industrial institutions and museums. As a Hohenzollern Emperor, however, he recognises completely that his Empire to-day amounts to no more than a roll of parchment unless he is prepared to fight any two enemies who may unite against him. Germany has fought her way up through bloody battles; and can only hope to maintain her present position by readiness to accept any challenge from the nations that snarl about her. Even members of her own household have been in the field against Prussia, and the task of

reconciling domestic political differences is scarcely less than that of preparing to meet a national war. Is it strange, then, that the ruler of Germany should look for support not to the popular representatives, who to him represent discord, but to the army, the navy, the many State officials, the Conservative nobles—all that appears to promise loyal devotion to the person and projects of the Sovereign?

The Emperor holds the future of Europe in his right hand—and how many are trying to peep through those strong fingers! He is the head of the largest, the strongest, and the most intelligently-guided army in the world, and is himself one of the most highly instructed in that army. His mind is original, receiving ideas from every quarter, allowing them to modify his views, but never to displace them. Many

of the harsh opinions passed upon him shortly before ascending the throne would have been sensibly tempered had their authors known how completely did his political sense of duty to Germany dominate every personal consideration.

When he ascended the throne, in June of last year, the opposition party, who represent particularly constitutional liberty and free-trade, were making much of the fact that the late Emperor Frederick, in the ninety-nine days allowed him, had shown a disposition to rule in harmony with their doctrines. As evidence of this, they referred to the fact that he had dismissed the late Home Secretary Puttkammer, because he was displeased that a Minister of the Crown should permit public servants to influence the popular vote in favour of the Government. The

young Emperor's conception of leadership excludes a favourable view of government by the people, and no clearer duty seems before him than to give unmistakable rebukes to such as sought to confuse Parliamentary government with the alleged utterances of a Hohenzollern Sovereign. That the Empress Victoria was suspected of having to some extent indoctrinated her Imperial husband with English constitutional ideas by no means assisted in making them palatable to Conservatives, for to make a thing odious in Germany to-day you need only suspect it of either Jewish or British extraction.

Rightly or wrongly, however, German Liberals claimed that for ninety-nine days at least an Emperor had reigned who was not conspicuously opposed to popular movement—who was even suspected of

leaning towards the John Bright school of political thought; and this alone served to render doubly delicate the task of the new Emperor, who knew little in favour of such doctrines—on the contrary, is firmly convinced that Germany is not the soil suited to their development.

What the policy of his reign is to be all can conjecture—no one assert. His accession to the throne was marked by the publication of manifestoes, first to his army, secondly to his navy, lastly to his people, leaving no doubt that in Germany, at least, the army should be recognised as the basis of the State's prosperity. About the middle of July he commenced a series of memorable visits to Russia, Sweden, and Denmark, the results of which remain unknown to the public, though there can be no doubt that if

personal influence can ever affect the action of sovereigns we must attribute the postponement of war almost entirely to his magnetic personal powers exerted in this crisis.

Hardly a word has been uttered by him so far, or an act committed by the Government, that has not raised a storm of criticism in the Press, of such a nature as would have been undreamed of under his grandfather, and yet he is logically pursuing the example of the victorious William. Can we suppose that this has no connection with the fact that ardent Liberals advertise their loyalty by wearing coins stamped with the features of Frederick the Noble?

The trifles that passed unnoticed when said or done by the venerable grandfather, to-day divide the people because a younger

Emperor is on the throne. Time may cure this malady, and we can therefore afford to rapidly glance at some of these trifles.

The English physician who attended the late Emperor received favours in England; the German physician who was dismissed received a decoration at the hands of the present Emperor.

The great Moltke retired shortly after the Emperor's accession, and much bad blood was roused because his successor's name is linked with the famous meeting at which it was sought to drag the Emperor, then Prince, into the Anti-Semitic League. In spite of the fact that William II. promptly repudiated any sympathy with such organisations, the papers did not drop the matter for many a long week.

The great pathologist, Virchow, was for the second time rejected as Rector of the Berlin University—a fact which gave occasion to the reflection that academic distinction could not be conferred upon the greatest living scientist, unless he was *personâ grata* with the Government.

In the late summer of 1888 a report went the rounds of the Liberal Press that the Emperor had addressed a gathering of the aristocracy in language that betokened a higher regard for them than the rest of his people. The alleged words read: "I need the support of the noblest of them—my nobility—and these I see well represented about me in the Order of St. John." Such language is impossible to conceive of at this day and in the mouth of the German Emperor,

and the words were promptly repudiated by the official Press. But the poison had already taken effect.

In September the *Deutsche Rundschau*, the leading literary review of Germany, was seized by the police because it published a section of the late Emperor's diary. Professor Geffcken, a man of wide reputation as an author on political history and philosophy, declared himself to be the guilty party, and was kept more than three months under arrest. The Government failed to prove him guilty; and this failure was not an event to be lightly passed over by the critics of the great Chancellor.

In the autumn occurred the Emperor's memorable visits to Austria and Italy, sources of unmixed good to the peace of Europe; and about the same time the

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opposition in the Press or on the platform is natural; to him a man is either for the Government or against it—loyal or disloyal. Socialists in his eyes are enemies of the Empire, and he does not hesitate to say so in spite of the fact that the Socialist vote was 750,000 at the last election. When he visited Breslau, last autumn, he publicly gave expression to his satisfaction that a Liberal candidate had been defeated at their last election. He has given offence to many political sections, but on the whole it would be hard to discover where his acts or words could be traced to mere caprice. His harshest critics must recognise that his behaviour is in perfect harmony with his conception of sovereign duty.

As a leader of armies, and we can now say of navies as well, the Emperor

cannot be judged except by such straws as sometimes tell us the direction of the wind. Last autumn he commanded about 50,000 men at his first grand manœuvres, and it was my good fortune to have been in the way of seeing something of them. He commanded, not by occupying a conspicuous eminence and nodding assent to the suggestions of venerable subordinates, as I have seen done elsewhere; on the contrary, he was obviously the master of the situation, carrying out a plan previously matured by himself, and ordering such modifications during the day as his quick perception and logical will suggested. Every day during this critical week, from sunrise until late in the afternoon, one conspicuous figure was always found hard at work, and that the Emperor, earning his soldier's pay as hardly as the

poorest of his Brandenburgers. Early one morning, on his way from headquarters to the front, he gave me a striking illustration of the way in which he has realised the brilliant promises of his youth, by entertaining me for nearly the whole distance in a manner best calculated to display the versatility and power of his mind. He began by explaining in detail the combinations proposed for the day; the situation of the different troops; the possible means of thwarting them. All this was done clearly and forcibly, so that even a layman found the picture complete. His words were constantly interrupted by despatches handed to him, but here, as through the excitement of the day's fight, he remained to all appearances as cool as though reviewing a company.

From military affairs the transition was natural to naval matters, in which his brother takes absorbing interest. Here, again, he asked questions about new types of cruisers and torpedo boats in foreign services, and discussed relative merits of different types with a precision of knowledge simply astonishing. The world, moreover, may be surprised to know that the Emperor in person discusses and approves the plan of every ship laid down in the navy.

It has not been my purpose to pretend that a man of thirty can occupy the throne of Frederick the Great, and immediately rule with the wisdom that rarely comes without long years of experience. But we can say that no ruler of his years has ever sat upon the throne with a mind more richly stored with practical know-

ledge; with a spirit more devoted to what he recognises as duty; with a body better trained by virtuous living to endure every form of work.

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